

Caltech | Funding Memo

Title: 2026 HFSP Research Grants: Early Career and Program Grants - LOI

Funding Agency: Human Frontier Science Program

External Deadline(s):

03/18/2025 02:00 PM PDT (Initiation of LOI)

03/27/2025 02:00 PM PDT (LOI)

Cognizant Office: Office of Sponsored Research

Description:

The International Human Frontier Science Program (HFSP) strives to strengthen open scientific inquiry by initiating international collaborative, interdisciplinary and cutting-edge basic research in the life sciences. The International Human Frontier Science Program Organization (HFSP/O) develops and implements the Program. The aim of the Program is to promote, through international cooperation, basic research focused on the elucidation of the sophisticated and complex mechanisms of living systems, for the benefit of all humankind. It aims to complement, not duplicate, the frontier life science programs of the countries that financially support HFSP/O. HFSP/O attaches highest importance to novelty, scientific merit, internationality, and interdisciplinarity.

Two types of Research Grant are available: **Early Career** and **Program Grants**.

Early Career Grants, formerly called 'Young Investigator's Grants', are meant to encourage outstanding scientists in the initial period of their independent careers, to formulate novel and promising research projects.

Program Grants are meant to allow teams of independent researchers to develop new lines of research through the collaboration. Priority will be given to new, innovative research projects for which preliminary results might not necessarily be available. Applications including independent investigators early in their careers are encouraged.

Frequency: Typically annual

Award:

- Depending on team size, a fixed sum is awarded to each team over three years:
 - Awarded 2-member teams will receive \$300,000, 3-member teams will receive \$400,000 and 4-member teams \$500,000 annually, if all members have their labs in different countries.
 - Please see additional funding details in the [guidelines](#).

- No salary support (including summer salaries) for the Principal Applicant, Co-Applicant or other faculty, institutional staff such as secretaries or laboratory managers, and no student tuition fees may be paid.
 - Salaries may be provided for research assistants (post-doctoral scientists, graduate students, technicians) essential for the new collaborative project.
- Purchase of equipment must be essential for the new collaboration which is proposed. Purchase of equipment to supplement current domestic programs is not allowable. Participating laboratories should already be equipped to pursue their current research.

Indirect Costs: 10% of Direct Costs

- **Caltech's minimum overhead rate is based on the award's annual gross funding. Please refer to the [FY25 Annual Rate Memo](#) for applicable minimum overhead requirements. Applicants must work within their division to account for the required overhead via an approved MORA form.**

Duration: 3 years

- Applicants will be notified in early July 2025 whether they are invited to submit a full proposal, with a deadline mid-September 2025.
- Awards will be announced in March 2026.

Discipline(s): Biology and Biological Engineering; Chemistry and Chemical Engineering; Engineering and Applied Science; Physics, Mathematics, and Astronomy

Eligibility: Research Faculty, Tenure-Track Faculty, Tenured Faculty

- HFSP supports teams of normally 2-4 scientists. Team members should not have collaborated before, they will normally not have published original research together, and the project must be significantly different from their ongoing research.
 - Applications from individual researchers are not eligible.
 - One member of the team is designated as the Principal Applicant and the others as Co-Applicants.
 - The Principal Applicant of the international team must be located in one of the HFSP member countries. Co-Applicants can be located in any country. Please see [guidelines](#) for details.
 - The Principal Applicant must be working at a non-profit academic institution. The team may include members from for-profit organizations if their expertise is necessary for the project. However, such team members may not receive any funds and will not be considered in calculating the amount of award.
 - The number of team members should normally be 2-4, unless a fifth member is clearly essential for the interdisciplinary nature of the project. Teams of 5 members are rarely successful.
 - Research project with all team members in one country (including cases in which a member moves after the LOI submission) are not eligible.
 - Teams with 2 members from the same institution are not eligible to apply.
 - A proposal from a team with three or four members where two team members have their laboratories in the same country is eligible only if the team can demonstrate that this collaboration is essential to maintain the frontier and interdisciplinary character of the proposed research.

- All team members must have obtained a research doctoral degree (PhD, MD or equivalent) before the LOI submission deadline and lead a research group (however small). All team members must be able to independently determine the course of the HFSP-funded project and have freedom to administer the awarded grant. “Post-docs” are not eligible.
 - Caltech researchers other than tenure-track faculty will need to obtain approval from the Division Chair and Vice Provost for Research prior to submitting an application.
- No individual may be an applicant on more than one letter of intent in the same review round.
- HFSP requires an ORCID ID from all applicants.
- Scientists cannot hold an HFSP Research Grant and an HFSP Fellowship at the same time.
- Additional eligibility guidelines for Early Career Grants:
 - Early Career applicants should be project leaders directing a research group. They must have full responsibility for the day to day running of their laboratories and full control of the HFSP funds. A scientist who has an established research theme with personnel (students and technicians) assigned to this theme may be considered independent. In such cases, written confirmation may be requested from the Head of Department (or equivalent) that the applicant is able to carry out the research independently.
 - All members of an RG-Early Career team must be within 5 years of obtaining an independent position and must have obtained their first doctoral degree (PhD, MD or equivalent) no longer than 10 years before the deadline for submission of the Letter of Intent. Exceptions may be made for periods of parental leave, compulsory military service or absence for medical conditions, but not for periods of unemployment.
- New for this cycle: Applicants need to declare their use of AI and be aware that HFSP may use tools to determine if text has likely been written by an AI tool.

Research Areas of Interest:

- HFSP projects are potentially transformative in addressing important fundamental problems at the frontiers of the life sciences or in crossing barriers to progress in the life sciences.
- Research topics may include biological functions at all levels of analysis: for example, studies on genes and individual molecules, intracellular networks, intercellular associations in tissues and organs, and networks underlying the complex functions of entire organisms including cognitive functions, as well as populations or ecosystems.
- HFSP supports interdisciplinary projects. The participation of scientists from disciplines outside the traditional life sciences such as physics, chemistry, computational biology, engineering, mathematics, nanoscience, physics or psychology is highly encouraged.
- The Human Frontier Science Program (HFSP) supports projects that challenge existing paradigms and extend the frontiers of life sciences by using novel approaches and techniques. To stimulate daring ideas and development of new methods which entail risks, preliminary results are not required in research grant applications.
- The potential of a project to move the frontiers of life sciences and lead to a breakthrough, is a major criterion in the review of HFSP research grants, and it is understood that projects with this potential may entail high risk.

Research Exclusions:

- HFSP does not fund the following:
 - Projects of a purely applied nature.

- Research aimed at developing novel methods or the study of analogs or models of biological activity unless these methods allow new biological questions to be answered in the context of the aim of the HFSP to fund fundamental research.
- Observational projects or systematic screening approaches.
- Large scale data collection as such, unless there is a convincing rationale for the collection and detailed methodology for the data analysis; this includes the systematic multi-species-omic analyses of populations or ecosystems, which do not address a fundamental biological question of general interest.
 - However, studies of the mechanisms of species-species interactions or their co-evolution are eligible.
- Proposals representing standard or incremental approaches, obvious next steps in the field or the laboratory of one or more applicants (routine projects) and proposals that do not represent significant changes in research direction from previous work of the applicants are unlikely to receive funding.

Post-Award Obligations:

- Annual reporting is required.

Recent Caltech Recipients:

- Carlos Lois (2022)
- Andre Hoelz (2018)
- Doris Tsao (2016)

Guidelines & Other Information:

Overview, Instructions, and FAQ: <https://www.hfsp.org/funding/hfsp-funding/research-grants>

Guidelines: <https://www.hfsp.org/sites/default/files/Sciences/Grants/LI%20Guidelines.pdf>

Past Recipients (All Grants): <https://www.hfsp.org/awardees/awards>

Submissions and awards for this grant program will be processed through the Office of Sponsored Research.

Opportunity ID: 2167